

## Message Text

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CHK N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1595

E.O. 11652: XGDS1  
TAGS: PINT, MILI, MA  
SUBJECT: RATSIRAKA AND THE MALAGASY MILITARY

REF: TANANARIVE 1534

SUMMARY: REPORTS OF GROWING DISENCHANTMENT WITH PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA AMONG ELEMENTS OF MALAGASY MILITARY HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD IN TANANARIVE IN RECENT WEEKS. RATSIRAKA, HOWEVER, WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE GAINED UPPER HAND OVER POSSIBLE DISSIDENTS BY RECENT ACTIONS, FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST. END SUMMARY.

1. MALAGASY PRESIDENT DIDIER RATSIRAKA SEPTEMBER 13 ADDRESSED "ANNUAL MEETING" OF HSLL RANKING OFFICERS OF MALAGASY ARMED FORCES HELD AT IVATO AIRBASE NEAR TANANARIVE SEPTEMBER 8-13. IN SPEECH, WHICH WAS HEADLINED IN LOCAL PRESS SEPTEMBER 15, RATSIRAKA ANNOUNCED MAJOR NEW PROGRAM OF ACQUISITION OF MATERIAL FOR MILITARY, INCLUDING AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, AND NAVAL CRAFT, AND EXPLF FORCES AND BASES. HE ALSO STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY WORKING WITH PEASANTS IN COUNTRYSIDE AND BECOMING "SPEARHEAD OF THE SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION OF THE FATHERLAND." RATSIRAKA ANNOUNCED IMMINENT RETIREMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL PHILIBERT RAMAROLAHY, CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF, AND PRESENTED TO ASSEMBLED OFFICERS (WHO FROM PRESS PHOTO APPEAR TO NUMBER OVER 100) MODELS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW UNIFORMS TO BE INTRODUCED FOR MALAGASY MILITARY.

2. BEFORE STAGING OF "ANNUAL MEETING" OF OFFICERS OF MALAGASY ARMED FORCES (NEVER BEFORE KNOWN AS AN ANNUAL EVENT), REPORTS

AND RUMORS OF GROWING  
DISENCHANTMENT WITH RATSIKAKA AMONG  
ELEMENTS OF MALAGASY MILITARY WERE WIDESPREAD IN TANANARIVE  
IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. ON SEPTEMBER 4 A LOCAL NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHER INFORMED PAO A NUMBER OF MILITARY OFFICERS, INCLUDING  
SEVERAL ON 8-MAN SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (CSR), ARE  
BECOMING DISILLUSIONED WITH RATSIKAKA AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE  
HIM REPLACED AS PRESIDENT OF CSR. SEVERAL SOURCES  
REPORTED RERIGNATION OR ATTEMPTED RESIGNATION OF  
MAJOR SOJA, LEADING PROTEGE OF ASSASSINATED FORMER CHIEF  
OF STATE COLONEL RATSIMANDRAVA, TOGETHER WITH SOJA'S CLOSE  
ASSOCIATE MAJOR ANDRIAMAHOLISON, ALSO OF GENDARMERIE. EMBASSY  
ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS THAT MOST MEMBERS OF MILITARY DEVELOP-  
MENT COUNCIL, INCLUDING FORMER CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL  
ANDRIAMAHAZO, ARE NOW COOL TOWARD RATSIKAKA OR CRITICAL OF  
HIM, AND RESENT HIS HIGH-HAOED RUNNING OF AFFAIRS.

3. DATT RECENTLY INFORMED BY SOURCE BELIEVED RELIABLE (A  
FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE) THAT SOJA AND  
ANDRIAMAHOLISON  
WERE IN FACT DETAINED FOR SEVERAL DAYS DURING EARLY  
SEPTEMBER AND QUESTIONED ABOUT REPORTS OF THEIR DISSENSIONET  
ACCORDING TO SOURCE, SOJA AND ANDRIAMAHOLISON NOW RELEASED,  
AND GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HOLDING FACT OF THEIR DETENTION  
VERY TIGHTLY.

4. COMMENT: GIVEN EARLIER WIDE PREVALENCE OF REPORTS OF  
MALAISE WITHIN ELEMENTS OF MILITARY, SHARP LURCH TO LEFT  
GOMR HAS TAKEN UNDER RATSIKAKA, AND HIS REPORTEDLY AUTO-  
CRATIC MANNER OF DECISION-MAKING IN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY,  
EXISTENCE OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH MADAGASCAR'S NEW PRESIDENT  
AMONG SOME OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES AND GENDARMERIE WOULD  
NOT BE SURPRISING. HOWEVER, RATSIKAKA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE  
SEIZED INITIATIVE AGAINST ANY POTENTIAL OPPPOSITION IN  
MILITARY FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, BY: (A) CONVOKING LARGE  
MEETING OF OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES VISIBLY TO ASSERT HIS  
LEADERSHIP; (B) HAVING MAJOR SOJA, HIS PRINCIPAL RIVAL ON  
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THE OLD MILITARY DIRECTORY, DETAINED AS A WARNING TO OTHERS;  
AND (C) PROMISING MILITARY A BASKETFULL OF ARMS AND OTHER  
GOODIES TO KEEP  
THEM HAPPY. (COMMANDER OF MALAGASY AIR  
CORPS HAS ALREADY INFORMALLY INQUIRED OF DATT RE PRICES AND  
SPECIFICATIONS OF AMERICAN HELICOPTERS -- TO BE REPORTED  
SEPARATELY.)

5. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT OFFICERS OF GENDARMERIE, MAIN  
POTENTIAL BASE OF SUPPORT FOR SOJA, WERE NOT INCLUDED IN  
ARMED FORCES GATHERING. ALSO, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW  
MILITARY WILL REACT TO BEING PROPELLED INTO COUNTRYSIDE  
TO WORK WITH PEASANTS, AS RATSIKAKA HAS NOW REPEATEDLY

STATED HE INTENDS THEM TO DO (REFTEL). BUT FOR THE TIME  
BEING AT LEAST, RATSIRAKA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE UPPER HAND OVER  
POSSIBLE DISSIDENT OR DISENCHANTED ELEMENTS IN  
THE MALAGASY MILITARY.  
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